

Overview

National Provider Identifier (NPI)

May 2004

HIPAA mandates that the Secretary of Health and Human Services adopt a standard unique health identifier for health care providers. The Final Rule on the NPI was published on January 23, 2004.

The effective date of the Rule is May 23, 2005. Health care providers do not need to take any action to apply for NPIs at this time. The system that will handle the assignment of NPIs will be ready to accept applications for NPIs after the effective date of the Final Rule (May 23, 2005). Health care providers may begin applying for NPIs on that date. The compliance date is May 23, 2007 (small health plans have an additional year).

The NPI will be numeric. It will be 10 positions in length (9 plus a check-digit in the last position). It will contain no embedded information about the provider. The NPI can be used on paper transactions.

When the NPI is implemented, covered entities must use only the NPI to identify providers in standard transactions (e.g., filing and processing health care claims and other transactions). Legacy provider identification numbers (e.g., BCBS, CHAMPUS, Medicaid number, etc.) will not be permitted. The Taxpayer Identifying Number (EIN) may need to be used for tax purposes.

Health care providers who are covered entities are required to obtain and use NPIs. Health care providers who are not considered covered entities may also apply and be assigned an NPI.

Health care providers will be assigned NPIs upon successful completion of an application form (paper or electronic). The National Provider System (NPS), being built under a CMS contract, will process the applications and updates, ensure the uniqueness of the health care provider, and generate the NPIs.

A single entity, known as the enumerator, and performing under a CMS contract, will operate the National Provider System (NPS). The enumerator will assist health care providers in completing applications and in furnishing updates, and will be responsible for resolving problems and answering questions.

Information about NPI implementation, including information on how to apply for NPIs, will be made available to the health care industry by CMS closer to the effective date.

For further information check the CMS web site at www.cms.hhs.gov. The following web site provides a link to the NPI Rule: www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2.